



**Richard
Tufnell**

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2020

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Dear All -

As I'm new to 'Forum contributions' perhaps I should also post here as well as my personal reply. If this is incorrect, please inform.

Dear Jon,

Thank you for replying. I knew his only daughter, Star Tufnell, well. She was only four when he was killed. She left me his medals, photographs and other bits and pieces. She never married and reached a high position in the military. I also remember his mother, Daisy Tufnell, who almost reached 100 and had the misfortune to marry two Tufnell's.

This post lists a good summary of his career, but in the family we understood he was also ADC to Sir William Redvers Buller. I have an interesting photograph of him sitting cross legged with senior British Officers and some decidedly shaggy looking Boers, taken I believe close to the armistice.

After he was attacked on the train, he briefly recovered consciousness but was unable to describe his attacker. He said that the man had swung in off the roof through the window. No-one was ever arrested for the crime, although huge efforts were made across large swathes of India to trace the attacker. The CID report says he had some 35 injuries, the most serious of which was a catastrophic skull fracture caused by a heavy blunt weapon. Fingerprints of the attacker were found - one set being on a Bradshaws Railway Guide. Possibilities of their belonging to anyone else were eliminated. Because blood was found scattered in the carriage it was assumed a struggle took place. My cousin appeared to have been struck initially through the carriage window, which may well have hindered his ability to defend himself. A gold watch and chain, some R's 300 and another silver watch appeared to have been taken, but all else remained. Two Europeans were seen struggling together on the train some time later, and the strong suspicion was that one of them was the murderer. However, the culprit or culprits were never traced despite extensive efforts lasting many months.

I now will copy in full a letter he sent to his wife Daisy Tufnell on January 11th 1916 as Brigadier General, 4 Q 126th Infantry Brigade, 42nd Division BEMF. concerning the evacuation from Gallipoli.

" Life has been such a whirl , the last week that I only know I've written you one letter from on board HMS Triad, and I really don't know what I've told you and what I haven't, so, if i'm guilty of repeating myself you must forgive me. I was originally left behind as Principal Military Landing Officer to supervise the embarkation of one division at Gully

Beach. All was desperately secret . There were only five people on the peninsular entrusted with the secret of the evacuation being decided upon, and I had some difficulty in getting permission to tell my general why I was remaining. Eventually they decided to only evacuate 700 men at Gully Beach, owing to the exposed position there; so I handed over the job to a lesser star and was given command of the "covering force" which was sent to act as a rearguard to protect the others while they embarked. I was then sent to live at corps headquarters."

I think we all felt confident that the Turkish infantry would not come on and attack : but we did expect a very severe shelling and at this time of the year the weather was a serious risk as all the beaches are so exposed. The 8th was the night decided upon; and although the day produced a calm sea, there was a southerly wind and a steadily falling barometer, which was a great anxiety. However, they decided to go through with it, and as we always expect the worst weather of the year about January 14th, to miss a chance might have put it off for weeks, or even a couple of months.

I can't tell you how many men and guns had to be embarked as the censor would object, but it was many thousands, and it was decided to go the whole operation in one night. If we weakened our force in preliminary night the and we were attacked the next day, we might have been in the soup. Our division had already been cleared and been relieved by another. Preparations were very full and complete. As there was no moon the paths had to be very carefully marked with wire and posts. Communication trenches not intended for use were blocked with sandbags. A steep zig-zag path down to the cliffs was fenced with a balustrade and all the supplies we could not hope to move were saturated with paraffin and tar ready to light at the last moment.

At 5 PM we began to thin out the men in the trenches bringing them back gradually in small batches, some of them for a five mile march trenches were only 40 or twenty yards from the Turks and there the men's feet had to be muffled in sandbags, and the last left the firing line at 11.45 PM. In places rifles and very lights were rigged with cans attached to the trigger, in to which water poured gradually through a small hole so that as soon as there was a weight of about 7lbs. it would pull the trigger and the rifle would go off. In this way our men would appear to be firing from the trenches long after they had left them.

It didn't seem possible that the Turks could have any doubts as to our intentions. In the first place there was increased activity in shipping for several days and nights before while supplies, baggage, guns,, and horses were being removed. Besides this my covering forces had to dig a new line of trenches, with a barbed wire entanglement right across the peninsula, about half a mile from Cape Helles: and this could be easily recognised from the top of Achi Baba. The only thing the Turk could be in any doubt about was the date and I expect he had up his mind that we should not attempt it on the 8th with the glass going down. We had very little rain for some days previously, which was a great help, as the tracks and communications trenches were not slippery - a great consideration, as it is clay everywhere.

They began to thin out the men in the front trenches at 5AM and kept continually withdrawing until 11 PM, by which time our trenches were absolutely empty, and it only

remained to be seen how long the Turks would take to find out. All worked like clockwork; nobody lost their way, nobody was forgotten and the different batches kept arriving punctually at the beaches where they were to embark. They had about four and a half miles to come back to the beach. Everything went on satisfactorily until after midnight, but the falling barometer was constantly on our minds, and kept us constantly anxious and about this time the anxiety was growing for although there was little increase in wind there was a constantly increasing swell. We had a little opposite corps HQ office, from which we were to be taken off by a naval picket boat at the last moment; and at about 1.30 the sailors came and told us that this could not be used as they were having considerable difficulty in loading the remaining guns onto the lighters.

"Two or three torpedo boats were to be used, each of which can stow about 1000 men but the bulk of the troops were put on to motor lighters which carry about 425, and as these have iron decks practically awash they are very dependant on fine weather, for after the troops have got aboard from the piers, they have to be transferred to the troop carrying ships. These motor lighters are known as 'beetles' as they are rather like these insects.

Conditions were getting worse every hour; in fact, every ten or fifteen minutes made a difference, and one of the piers was already hors de combat. Still, we were quite confident of success as the Turks showed no signs of activity and all was working well up into schedule time. At 2.30 am we got news which gave us furiously to think. One of the two lighters at Gully Beach had gone aground, and all efforts to get her afloat were unavailing. The one available was filled to the brim, but there remained 160 men with no means of transport. The only thing to do was to march this party down to one of the main beaches (a distance of two miles), where the embarkation had been practically finished. It was no use risking one thousand men to save 160, so the bulk of my covering force was called in then, leaving only fifty men to cover the withdrawal of the belated party, and these were all duly embarked. Had things worked out at Gully Beach as they did at the other place we should have completed with a comfortable margin. But the withdrawal of the belated party in the dark, by a road which had not been reconnoitred, took nearly one and a half hours, and it was a very critical time, for it was beginning to blow hard, and failure to embark would mean a ticket (single not return) to Constantinople. However, they did eventually reach their destination, and began to fill up the last lighter, together with the last fifty men of the covering force, which I then withdrew.

The little temporary pier which had been rigged up for us was quite unpracticable by this time, so we made for number one pier on the main beach, where we were told our steam boat was to take us off. But when we walked halfway down it we found only odd floating barrels in the swell; the centre of it no longer existed, so we went to number 2. There the last lighter was loading, and we went over the lighter onto the steamboat and cast off at 3.53 AM; the lighter getting away at 4.05 am and now the fireworks began. Arrangement had been made to light the bonfires destroying the surplus stores at 4.00 am: this was done by winding an inflammable fuse round an ordinary candle, which burned at the rate of an inch an hour so that the fuse ignited as soon as the required

length of candle had burned. The first flared up punctually at 4.00 am and the others at 4.05, 4.07 and at 4.10 the magazine went up with a terrific report. Eight guns had been previously blown up. They were obliged to keep a certain amount to the last, and those selected were badly worn out.

We had a horrible passage on the steamboat, and I felt nearly ready to die! But a mile out, we got alongside the HMS Triad, the Admirals yacht, and climbed aboard with some difficulty. I was too overcome to bother about my kit, and trusted that the boats crew would see to this; but they betrayed my hopes, as they were evidently too much occupied to think of such trifles. I soon found I was minus my haversack (containing revolver) electric lamp, and oil skin coat; next day I recovered all except the haversack, which I am confident I will never see again. I sent all my other kit some days in advance with the exception of one blanket and Gillette razor.

Now we had the welcome sight of a clean white tablecloth and a glass of champagne, and at 5.30 we tumbled into bunks and slept till eight. On waking we found ourselves in Tenbros harbour and a jolly good breakfast waiting for us.

This was 9th January, and at 12.30 I went off in a picket boat to HMS Chatham, as I had the offer of a passage to Mudros, where my brigade was. It was a horrid sou'wester, but I thought it would be silly to miss the chance of going in a good ship like that, as the only alternative would have been the open deck of a trawler, and a six or eight hour journey, whereas the Chatham could do it in about three and a half hours. Excellent lunch (cold pheasant) in the Captains cabin, and at 2.30 we got under weigh. It was no fun as it was an absolute dead wind, and she fairly put her nose into it. Sofa, armchairs and even the captains bed, contained the limpest of figures - three generals, a naval captain, and a general staff officer. About 5.45 PM we anchored in Mudros harbour, and as it was late, I transferred to SS Aragon and stayed the night there. The next day I joined my brigade on shore and then I felt that was the end of the evacuation of Helles.

"But my kit was a sad matter for more than half of it was missing; some was recovered during the next two days, the rest must either be altogether lost, or have gone in a ship to Alexandria direct. What are missing are all my thin clothes, including khaki and drill, camp table and chair. Time will show. This was 10th January, on 14th January my brigade sailed for Alexandria in the SS Allantian, and interest now centres on what is to be our destination in Egypt.

14th January, - Here I am on board a ship, and we expect to sail for Egypt early tomorrow. I have the whole of my brigade on board and several other smaller lots as well. I am in command of the troops. This seemed rather a bore at first, as it means a certain amount of work; but when I saw my cabin, boredom gave place to satisfaction, for I am in real luxury - a regular suite with bathroom, bridge and writing tables, armchairs galore, and Bartolozzi prints on the walls. There's only one such other on the ship Occupied by the corps commander.